Oklahoma Chess Monthly

NOVEMBER 2020

Chess News and Chess History for Oklahoma

The Queen's Gambit comes to Netflix. See page 11

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- Plus News Bites, Game of the Month, Puzzles, Top 25 List, Tournament Reports, and more.

Xiong at the U.S. Championship

by Tom Braunlich

The biggest story in our region this month, besides the ongoing disruption of chess activity caused by the pandemic, was perhaps the fine performance of local hero GM Jeffery Xiong at the official U.S. Championship held in October.

The *Honorary Okie* from Dallas, 19-year-old Jeffery Xiong, finished in 2nd place in the first-ever online competition for the championship title, behind super-GM Wesley So. But Xiong was in the hunt until the very end, and produced a score that would win the tournament in most years. In order to win, So had to approach the record scores of Bobby Fischer, going 9-2 in the all-grandmaster event.

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The tournament was held efficiently online, with rapid time controls of G/25 +10. And yet, the quality of the play seemed quite high, with the players producing many sparkling games. The St. Louis Chess Club again sponsored the event, with excellent online GM commentary and coverage. They were generous with the $150,000 prize fund, which was unchanged despite the downgrade to just four days worth of play (three games per day in the 12-player round-robin event).

I present a few key battles here.

Wesley So set a blistering pace, winning his first 5 games. But Xiong and GM Ray Robson were not far behind and chased him until the final day. Xiong defeated Robson in round 8 to draw even with So. This set up the key game in round 9, were So and Xiong clashed in a very sharp Sicilian, and the tournament turned on the result.

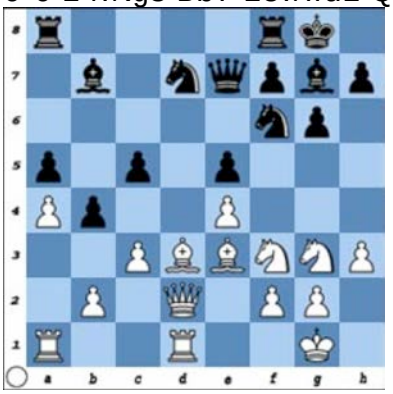
This game I annotated as "Game of the Month" for this issue, see page 12.

You can view replays of the live coverage of the event on YouTube, here.

GM Jeffery Xiong (2709)
GM Hikaru Nakamura (2736) [B08]
US Championship lichess.org INT (7.1), 28.10.2020 *[Notes by TB]*

[Here Jeffery impressively defeats Hikaru, the defending champion (who did not have a good event, finishing 7th).]

1.e4 g6 2.d4 d6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 Bg7 5.Be3 c6 6.Qd2 b5 7.Bd3 Nbd7 8.h3 e5 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.a4 b4 11.Ne2 a5 12.c3 c5 13.0-0 0-0 14.Ng3 Bb7 15.Rfd1 Qe7



The position looks rather equalish at first

sight, doesn't it? Symmetrical pawns, etc. But actually white's pieces are a bit more active (ask the unhappy B on g7) and black's queenside pawns might easily become vulnerable if white can penetrate. Jeffery's next move threatens to do just that, with a pawn capture followed by Rc7. Naka stops that, only to find out Jeffery's move has a second idea behind it — to protect the c4 square!]

16.Rac1! Rfc8 17.cxb4 cxb4 18.Bc4!

[A very instructive move, made possible by Rac1! The bishop on this diagonal targets f7 and threatens Ng5. Note how quickly Naka's position falls apart!]

18...Nf8

19.Qd6!

[This queen trade is also instructive, basically giving Jeffery access to the weak dark squares on the queenside, and penetrating with a rook. Botvinnik was famous for a similar queen trade that won a key game in one of his world championship matches. It's the kind of move that superior grandmasters make...]

19...Qxd6 20.Rxd6 Rc7 21.Rb6 Re8

[21...Bxe4? 22.Rxf6!+-; Apparently black's only

chance was the retreat 21...Bc8 intending ...Be6. But white remains significantly better in that position.]

22.Ng5 Ba8 23.Ra6 Bb7 24.Rxa5 Ba8 25.Bb3 Rd7 26.Ra6 h6 27.Nxf7 Rxf7 28.Bxf7+ Kxf7 29.Rc7+ Kg8 30.Rca7 Bxe4 31.Rxf6! Bxf6 32.Nxe4 Bd8 33.Ra8 Ne6 1-0

GM Jeffery Xiong (2709)
GM Ray Robson (2673) [C45]
US Championship lichess.org INT (8.6), 28.10.2020 *[Notes by TB]*

Going into this game these two players were tied for 2nd place, ½-point behind Wesley So.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4

The Scotch Opening has the reputation of being drawish, but Xiong has some improvements in mind in one of the main lines.

3…exd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nxc6 bxc6 6.Bd3 d5 7.Qe2 dxe4 8.Nc3 Bb4 9.Bxe4 0-0 10.Bxc6 Rb8 [This pawn gambit has been considered okay for black.] 11.0-0 Qd6 12.Bb5 Ng4 13.g3 Qc5 14.Bd3 Bxc3 15.bxc3 Ne5

Black now has many threats, including …Bg4.

16.Ba3!

Xiong plays an improvement over a previous GM game!

16. … Qxa3 17.Qxe5

Here, it is not so much white's extra pawn, which is doubled and weak, but his centralized queen that gives him advantage. Again, this is a type of idea that positional players like Karpov and Botvinnik made famous, and whom clearly Jeffery has studied.

17… Be6 18.Rfe1 Qd6 19.a4 Rfd8

[The ending after a queen exchange, with white's R becoming active, would bring no relief for black.]

20.Rad1 Qc6 21.Bb5 Qb7 22.Rd4!

You can see how Jeffery is using his dominating queen to give black a choice between a bad probably lost ending, or allowing white to build up his kingside attack. The rook swings up and over to attack the kingside, and black dare not exchange it and undoable white's pawns.

22…g6 23.Rh4 Qf3 24.Rf4 Qb7 25.Qf6 c6 26.Bd3 Re8

White to move and win.

27.Bxg6! fxg6

[Of course, if 27...hxg6 28.Rh4! and mate.]

28.Rxe6 c5 29.Qe5 Qd7 30.Rxe8+ Rxe8 31.Qxc5 Qd1+ 32.Kg2 Qxc2 33.Qxa7 Qb3 34.Qd7 Ra8

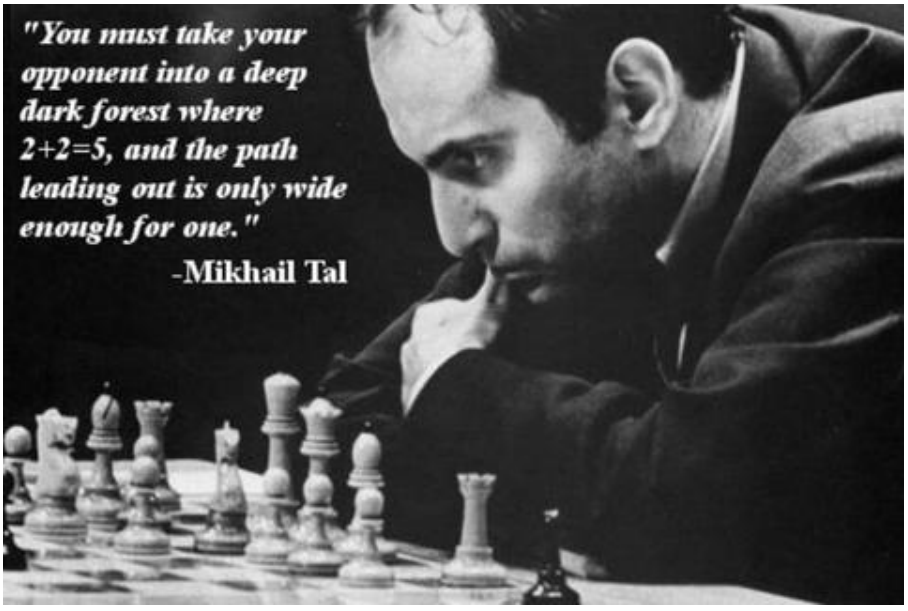
35.c4 [Note how Xiong does not worry about protecting all his extra pawns with a move like Qc6, but instead concentrates on controlling the center, preventing counterplay.] Qxa4 36.Qe6+ Kh8 37.Rf7 Qa1 38.Qe7 Kg8 39.Rxh7 Rf8 40.Rh4 Qa8+ 41.Qe4 Qa6 42.Qd5+ Kg7 43.Qe5+ Rf6 44.Rf4 Qa8+ 45.Kg1 Qf8 46.Qxf6+ Qxf6 47.Rxf6 1-0

The Story of a Little Philippine Travel Set

Okie chessplayer Gabe Coss received a gift from his grandma — an old hand-made wooden peg-type travel set, with a black pawn missing. It had been down in her basement for many years.

A lot of other tournament chess players might have been uninterested in the damaged set, and tossed it in a drawer. But, as a woodworker (see July 2018 issue of OCM for the story of how he made his own Dubrovnik chess set), he was interested and examined it closely. He uncovered a surprising story behind the 50-year-old set, and then made a nice video for YouTube that discusses its amazing history – and ends with a quick view of how he made a replacement pawn by hand to fix it! It ends with a challenge to you to guess which pawn was the new one he made. I couldn't guess it, can you? See the video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43l_jp6kZBU&feature=youtu.be

Which was the replacement pawn Gabe made? See the video for the answer!


"You must take your opponent into a deep dark forest where 2+2=5, and the path leading out is only wide enough for one."
-Mikhail Tal

The States Cup Online Team Tournament:

Oklahoma finishes in the middle of the Central Division – but was the only team to defeat the Division Champions…

By Tom Braunlich

Division play in the first year of this pandemic-inspired online team tournament between the states finished up in October. It will proceed with the playoffs in November.

See last month's issue for more details of the event and how it works, with four-player teams that must average under 2200 rating, and rapid G/15 games.

I played in a few of the matches and did not do very well. Personally I found the play rather confusing, and did not like that I was unable to see what was happening overall. I couldn't see how the other games were going and didn't find out until well after each round. So, in other words, it all felt very abstract to me; but then I'm an old-school player who is not used to online play.

On the other hand, the highlight of the season from our state's perspective was the fine play of the stalwarts of the team: Ryan Amburgy, Logan Zachare, and Matt Dalthorp. All of them are players who are under-rated and improving anyway, but even so they performed well above their rating, and had 2200+ performance ratings in the event. In several cases they went 4-0 versus mostly higher-rated competition!

The main bright spot for the Okies was their win over top-ranked Iowa – the team that won the division. Iowa's team rating was 2185, compared to Oklahoma's 2027. The Okie team this match consisted of Amburgy, Dalthorp, Zachare, and Joe Veal. Iowa had NM Arshaq Saleem (2276), NM Tim McEntee (2200), NM James Neal (2174), and Anish Lodh (2092).

See the results table at right. (Team score data was kept in a spreadsheet format like this accessible by all teams).

The 9-7 loss for Iowa was their only defeat of the season. Their team featured three NMs on the top boards, plus an under-rated expert. The match was exciting, with the score tied 6-6 going into the final round of play. Okies scored 3-1 to win it in the final round. I present three of those games below.

Iowa					Oklahoma
NM Arshaq Saleem	B	0.5	0.5	W	Joe Veal
NM Tim McEntee	B	0	1	W	Logan Zachare
NM James Neal	W	1	0	B	Matt Dalthrop
Anish Lodh	W	0	1	B	Ryan Amburgy
NM Arshaq Saleem	W	1	0	B	Logan Zachare
NM Tim McEntee	W	1	0	B	Joe Veal
NM James Neal	B	0	1	W	Ryan Amburgy
Anish Lodh	B	0	1	W	Matt Dalthrop
NM Arshaq Saleem	W	1	0	B	Matt Dalthrop
NM Tim McEntee	W	0.5	0.5	B	Ryan Amburgy
NM James Neal	B	1	0	W	Joe Veal
Anish Lodh	B	0	1	W	Logan Zachare
NM Arshaq Saleem	B	0	1	W	Ryan Amburgy
NM Tim McEntee	B	0	1	W	Matt Dalthrop
NM James Neal	W	0	1	B	Logan Zachare
Anish Lodh	W	1	0	B	Joe Veal
FINAL SCORES		7	9		

Playoff games are schedule for November 1 and November 7, and you can watch them streamed live on twitch.tv in the chess channel.

Official site:

https://stateschesscup.wordpress.com

Below are several annotated games from this event:

TOP 25

For NOVEMBER 2020

Active Oklahoma Players

	Player	This Month	Change	
1	Advait Patel	2537	0	
2	Jeffrey Haskel	2362	0	
3	Howard Zhong	2307	0	
4	Tom Braunlich	2200	0	
5	Mark Hulsey	2199	0	
6	Ryan Amburgy	2186	24	
7	Anthony Paolercio	2080	0	
8	Veronika Zilajeva	2080	0	
9	Tom Patton	2077	0	
10	Charles D Unruh	2063	0	
11	James Long	2054	1	
12	Michael Nugent	2042	0	
13	Matt Dalthorp	2029	0	
14	Charles M Unruh	2024	0	
15	Chuck Johnson	2010	0	
16	Jeff Colbert	2008	0	
17	Stephen Gehly	2000	0	
18	David Luscomb	1995	0	
19	Logan Zachare	1962	52	▲
20	Charles Woodall	1937	0	▲
21	Paul Hodgden	1935	0	▲
22	Joe Dean Veal	1928	-33	▼
23	Wayne Hatcher	1926	0	▼
24	Harold Brown Jr.	1901	0	
25	Shaun Graham	1893	0	

Player of the Month

ELIZABETH HARMON

My new hero. (See page 11 for a review of the exciting new Netflix chess movie.)

Logan Zachare, Logan (1982)
NM Tim McEntee (2200) [A45]
2020 States Chess Cup: Iowa vs Oklahoma
[Notes by TB]

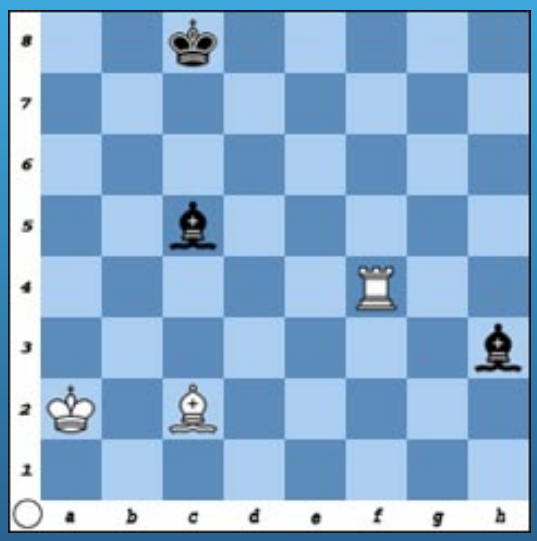
Tim is a popular Life Master from Iowa who has frequently played here in Oklahoma. 1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 Ne4 3.Bf4 c5 4.d5 d6? [This is not a good line to play against the Tromp. White gets a comfortable version of a Benoni-type game.] 5.f3 Nf6 6.e4 g6 7.Qd2 Bg7 8.Bb5+!? [I wouldn't make this trade. The B is not a 'bad' bishop you need to eliminate; and removing a couple pieces from the board eases black's cramp. Simply 8.Nc3 0-0 9.g4 is scary for black.]
8...Nbd7 9.Nc3 [9.Nh3!?] 9...a6 10.Bxd7+ Bxd7 11.Nge2 b5?! [This move is too normal, perhaps; which is not surprising given the fast time control. But black is preparing to "castle into it" on the kingside, where white is all set for attack. Perhaps better was 11...h5!? borrowing a page from the Dragon Variation where black delays white's pawn storm and refuses to castle -- although admittedly then white could play 12. e5!? with unclear play.]

12.Bh6 0-0 [Castling into it. White now gets an initiative that soon leads to a clear edge, but can he break through?]
13.h4 b4 14.Nd1 Bb5 15.h5 e5 16.dxe6 fxe6 17.Bxg7 Kxg7 18.hxg6 hxg6 19.Qh6+ Kf7 20.Nf4 Rg8 21.Ne3 [Bring up the reserves!] 21...Qf8 22.Qh3 Bd7 23.Qg3 e5 24.Nfd5 Nxd5 25.Nxd5 Rh8 26.0-0-0 Rxh1? 27.Rxh1 Qg7 28.Qg5 Re8

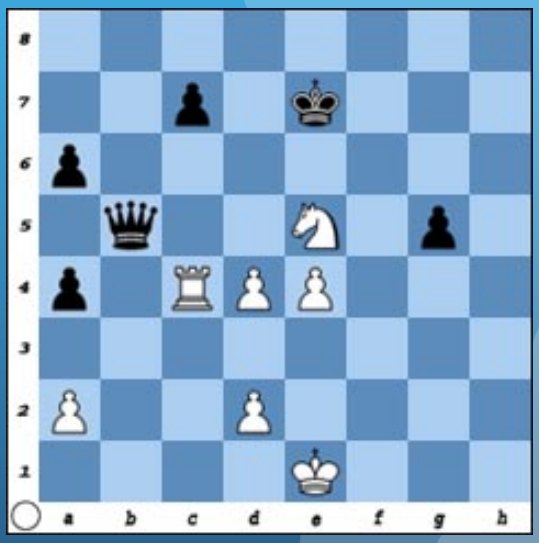
29.Nf6! Rh8 30.Rxh8 Qxh8 31.Nxd7 Ke6

PUZZLES

Answers Next Page



White to move and win. (Easy)



White to move and win. (Difficult)

32.Nb6 Qh1+ 33.Kd2 Kf7 34.Nd5 Kg7 35.Ne7 Kf7 36.Nxg6 Qf1 [Black is a piece down, but he has real chances for perpetual checks here, and in mutual time trouble it is not easy to get out of them. Logan seems to be very good with the clock and handles it well.] 37.Qg3 c4 38.Nh4 c3+ 39.bxc3 bxc3+ 40.Kxc3 Qa1+ 41.Kd2 Qd4+ 42.Ke2 Qc4+ 43.Ke1 Qxc2 44.Qg6+ Kf8 45.Qxd6+ Kf7 46.Qd2 Qb1+ 47.Kf2 Qb6+ 48.Kg3 Qf6 49.Qd7+ Kg8 50.Qe8+ Kh7 51.Qg6+ Qxg6+ 52.Nxg6 Kxg6 53.Kg4 a5 54.g3 a4 55.f4 exf4 56.gxf4 a3 57.e5 Kf7 58.Kf5 Ke7 59.e6 Ke8 60.Kf6 Kf8 61.e7+ Ke8 62.f5 1-0

Ryan Amburgy (2162)
NM James Neal (2174) [D00]
2020 States Chess Cup: Iowa vs Oklahoma
[Notes by TB]

1.d4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 3.Bf4 Bd6 4.Bg3 Nf6 5.Nf3 a6 6.e3 c5 7.dxc5 Bxc5 8.Bd3 Nc6 9.0-0 0-0 10.e4 Nb4 11.e5 Nh5 12.Bh4 f6 13.exf6 Nxf6 14.Ne5 Nxd3 15.Qxd3 Qc7 16.Rae1 b5 17.Bxf6 gxf6 18.Ng4 Qf4 19.h3 Kh8 20.Ne2 Qg5 21.Nd4 Qg8 A clever move, intending to support a pawn advance in the center and play with his bishop on the diagonal. But Ryan does not panic and diffuses this well – after which the pawn advances can be seen to have merely weakened black's position. 22.Qc3 Bxd4 23.Qxd4 e5 24.Qb4 d4 25.f4 h5 26.Nf2 Bb7 27.Ne4 Qg6 28.f5 Qg7 29.Rf2 Rg8 30.Kf1 Bd5 31.Qd6 Bxe4 32.Rxe4 Qg5 33.h4! Qh6?

34.Rxe5 Black's position now falls apart. Rad8 35.Qe6 d3 36.cxd3 Rxd3 37.Re1 Qg7 38.Qe2 Rd5 39.Qxh5+ Qh7 40.Qxh7+ Kxh7 41.Re6 Rd1+ 42.Ke2 Rb1 43.Kf3 1-0

Answers to the Puzzles

(1) A plethora of pins — 1. Rc4 (pin) 1…Be6 (counter-pin) 2. Bf5! (counter-counter-pin!) 2. … Bxf5 3. Rxc5+ followed by Rxf5 and wins.

(2) The Rook plus Knight outplay the Black Queen on an open board.
1. Rb4! (the rook can't be taken because of a fork, and e8 is the queen's only safe square)
1. … Qe8 (1…Qa5 2. Nc6+)
2. Rb8! Qh5 (Again, the queen's only safe square where she isn't forked.)
3. Rh8!
And now the black queen runs out of safe squares and is lost. White wins.

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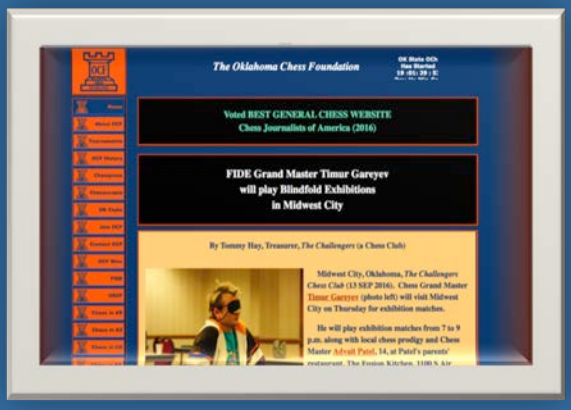
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FIDE Grand Master Timur Gareyev
will play Blindfold Exhibitions
in Midwest City

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… and more

Matt Dalthorp (2029)
NM Tim McEntee (2200) [B32]
States Chess Cup: Iowa vs Oklahoma
[Notes by TB]

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 e5 [The sharp Kalishikov Variation.]
5.Nb5 d6 6.c4 Be7 7.N1c3 a6 8.Na3 f5 [Because black delayed ...Nf6 in the opening he can make this double-edged thrust now.]
9.exf5 Bxf5 10.Bd3 Be6 11.0-0 Nf6 12.Nc2 0-0 13.Nd5 Rf7 14.Be3 Rc8 15.Bb6 Qd7 16.Nce3 Rcf8 17.Nc7 e4 18.Nxe6 Qxe6 19.Be2 Ne5 20.h3

20. ... d5
[This move uncovers an attack on the exposed B on b6, and initiates an interesting tactical skirmish in the middle. The essential ingredient in the tactics here is rather hidden at this point, but plays a big part -- the lineup of black pieces on the a2-g8 diagonal provides opportunities for pins.]
21.Bd4 Nxc4

22.Nxd5!? Nd6? [22...Qxd5 23.Bxf6 Qxd1 24.Raxd1 Rxf6 25.Bxc4+ Kh8 26.Bd5 is at best drawish for Black. NM McEntee wants more than that.]

23.Nxe7+ Rxe7 24.Bc5 Rd7 25.Bxd6 Rxd6 [] [25...Rfd8!=]

26.Bc4!
[Remember what I said about this diagonal? Matt cleverly inflicts a pinned knight on d5 on his opponent that persists for a long time and eventually get's lost.]
26...Nd5 27.Qh5 g6 28.Qg5 Rf5 29.Qd2 Kg7 30.Rad1 Re5 31.Qd4 Qf6 32.f4 [32.Rd2]
32...exf3 33.Rxf3 Re1+ 34.Kh2 Qxd4? [Black could still draw with 34...Rxd1!=]
35.Rxd4 Re5 36.Rfd3 Rf6 37.Rxd5 [and white won.] 1-0

NM James Neal (2174)
Logan Zachare (1962) [C41]
2020 States Chess Cup: Iowa vs Oklahoma
[Notes by TB]
1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nge2 exd4 5.Nxd4 Be7 6.g3 0-0 7.Bg2 c6 8.a4 Re8 9.0-0 Bf8 10.h3 Be6 11.g4 d5?! 12.Nxe6 [12.e5 Nfd7 13.f4] 12...fxe6 13.g5 Nfd7 14.exd5 exd5

15.Nxd5!
Snarfing a pawn.
15. … Na6
[15...cxd5 16.Bxd5+ Kh8 17.Bxb7 wins]
16.Nf4 Ndc5 17.Qg4 Nb4 18.Nh5 Ne6 19.Rd1 Qc7 20.Qc4
[According to my comp, 20.Be4!+- is winning. But it's a rapid game so such subtleties can be forgiven. However, White's actual move allows an instructive rejoinder that gets black back in the game!]

20...Qf7!
[It's not often we see a defensive combination, but here black is forced to find this only move, and it comes with a double-counter-threat! Black threatens not only ...Qxh5, but also the continuation in the game that wins a pawn back and equalizes!]

21.Ng3 Nxg5! 22.Qxf7+ [22.Qg4!?]
22...Nxf7 23.c3 Na6 24.Bf4 Rad8 25.Ne4 Nc5 26.Nxc5 Bxc5 27.b4 Bd6 28.Be3 Be5 29.Rdc1 a6 30.b5 cxb5 31.axb5 axb5 32.Ra7 Nd6 33.Bxb7 Nxb7 34.Rxb7 Rc8 35.Rxb5 Bxc3 36.Rd1 [Matt has traded down to an equal ending. It's not clear at what point his opponent might have realized his team was behind and he needed to win in order to tie the match. During these events it was not easy to keep track of what your team members were scoring during the game. I only found out afterward; but it might have been possible to find out if a player wants to check the other games during his own play. In any case, here the game is a dead draw, but white needs to win, and he seems to know it as he soon self-destructs in the effort:]
36...Rcd8 37.Rc1 Bf6 38.Kg2 Rd7 39.Kg3 Kf7 40.h4 Ree7 41.Rcc5 h6 42.Rf5 Kg6 43.h5+ Kh7 44.Kg4 Bd4 45.Kf3 Bxe3 46.fxe3 Rd3 47.Rbe5 Rxe5 48.Rxe5 Kg8 49.Re7 Rd5 50.Kg4 Rg5+ 51.Kh4 Kf8 52.Ra7 Re5 53.Ra3 Kf7 54.Kg4 Rg5+ 55.Kh4 Ke6 56.e4 Ke5 57.Ra5+ Kf4 58.Ra4 Re5 59.Kh3? [59.Ra7 Rxe4 60.Rxg7 Kf5+=]
59...Rxh5+ 60.Kg2 Re5 61.Ra7 g5 62.Rf7+ Kxe4 63.Rh7 Re6 64.Kg3 Kf5 [This ending is a win for black as long as he does not allow white the chance to set up a good blockade of the pawns. The opponent plays it out to the bitter end, but Logan shows he knows how to win it...]
65.Rf7+ Rf6 66.Rh7 Kg6 67.Rh8 Rb6 68.Rg8+ Kh5 69.Ra8 Rb3+ 70.Kg2 Kh4 71.Ra6 h5 72.Ra5 g4 73.Kh2 Rb2+ 74.Kg1 g3 75.Re5 Kg4 76.Kf1 h4 0-1

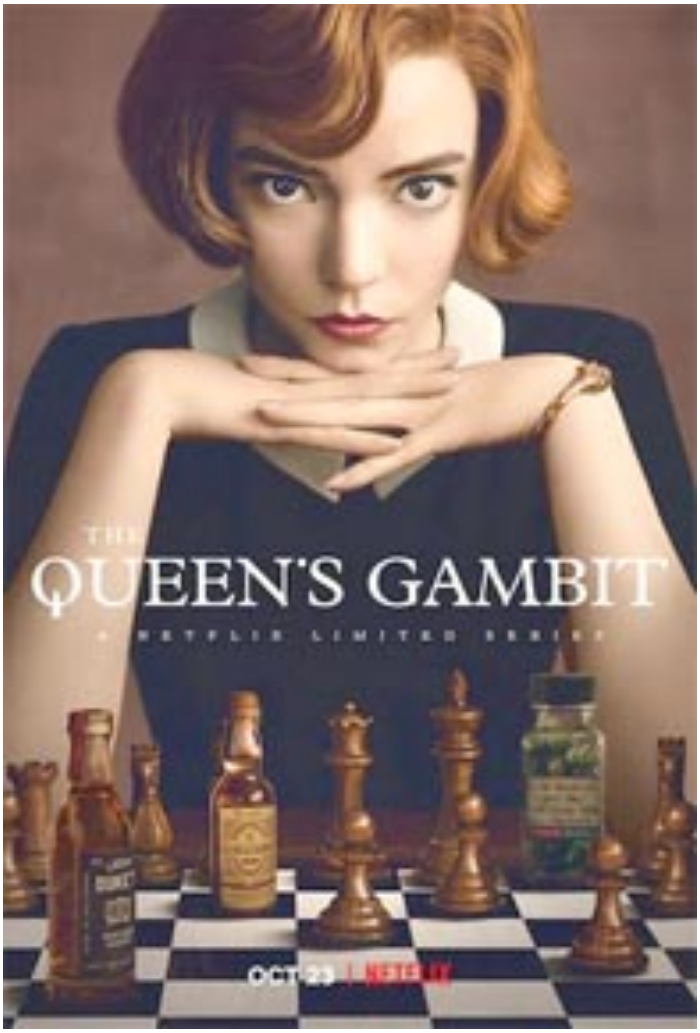
Anthony Paolercio (2080) –
Mike Mills (1969) [B33]
2020 States Chess Cup: Nebraska vs Oklahoma
[Notes by TB]
1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 e5 6.Ndb5 d6 7.Bg5 a6 8.Na3 b5 9.Nd5 Be7 10.Bxf6 Bxf6 11.c3 Bg5 12.Nc2 Ne7 13.h4 Bh6 14.Nce3 Be6 15.a4 Rb8?! 16.axb5 axb5?
[16...Bxe3 17.Nxe3 axb5 18.Ra6 Rb6Y]
17.Nxe7 Bxe3 [17...Qxe7 18.Bxb5+!]
18.Nd5 [18.Nc6 Bxf2+ 19.Kd2!?]
18...Bh6 19.Ra6 0-0

20.Rxd6?
[A faulty combination! 20 Be2 was better.]
20...Qc8?
[Black 'believes' his higher-rated opponent and panics, when actually the combination can be refuted: 20...Qxd6! 21.Nf6+ gxf6 22.Qxd6 Rfd8 23.Qc6 Ra8! and white's king would have been in trouble, having paid a big price for delaying his kingside development in order to win some material!]

21.Ne7+ Kh8 22.Nxc8 [and white won.] 1-0

THE QUEEN'S GAMBIT Debuts on Netflix: World Notices Chess is Cool

If you haven't seen it already, drop what you are doing, get yourself a subscription to the Netflix channel (which you can watch online via your computer if you don't have it streaming to your TV), and watch the 7-hour movie series "The Queen's Gambit", starring Anya Taylor-Joy as a female player from an orphanage who makes a huge splash in the world of chess competition. You will love it.



The movie is based on the popular 1983 novel by Walter Tevis, and is set in the 1960s world. It combines fictional players mixed in with the names of real grandmasters. The cinematography and acting are wonderful, giving the viewer the real feel of the 1960s Soviet Union-dominated chess world, the same world that Bobby Fischer beat in 1972.

What is perhaps most fascinating about it is its realistic portrayal of what chess tournaments were really like back then, ranging from dinky weekend swiss events up to international GM round-robins. We see many things that are no longer done, such as players smoking at the board, using old mechanical chess clocks, using old "English descriptive notation" when they talk, and using "adjournments" when the game reaches move 40, in which the players seal a move and resume the game later.

For us older players, it's all very nostalgic, but I think modern players will find it fascinating as well … it was a very different time for chess, and in some ways was a lot more fun.

Visually, it is a feast for the eyes. The acting is wonderful, and the story is good on many levels, and manages to make chess suspenseful, intriguing, and exciting. The ending is very satisfying.

Several of my family members, who know practically nothing about the sport of chess, told me they found it fascinating to watch. So if you are a chessplayer who would like your non-playing friends to understand you, point them here!

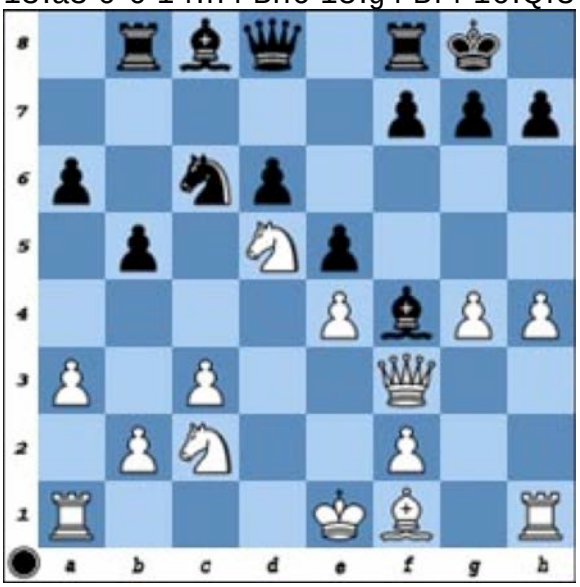
GM Garry Kasparov and NM Bruce Pandolfini consulted for the film to make the chess parts realistic. Next month I'll have a sample of some of the puzzle-like positions we glimpse her playing in the movie.

Highly recommended! There are a few minor PG-13 moments for kids, but nothing shocking. Give it a try!

This issue's Game of the Month is the exciting key game in the recent U.S. Championship with Honorary Okie Jeffery Xiong taking it to Super-GM Wesley So. In this ninth-round game the players were tied for first place, with three rounds to go. The outcome of the whole event was in the balance.

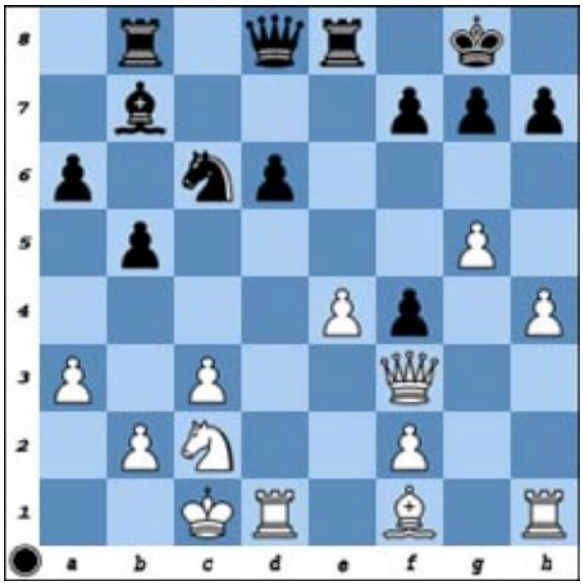
GM Wesley So (2770) –
GM Jeffery Xiong (2709) [B33]
US Championship lichess.org INT (9.2), 28.10.2020
[Notes by TB]

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 e5 6.Ndb5 d6 7.Bg5 a6 8.Na3 b5 9.Nd5 Be7 10.Bxf6 Bxf6 11.c3 Bg5 12.Nc2 Rb8 13.a3 0-0 14.h4 Bh6 15.g4 Bf4 16.Qf3

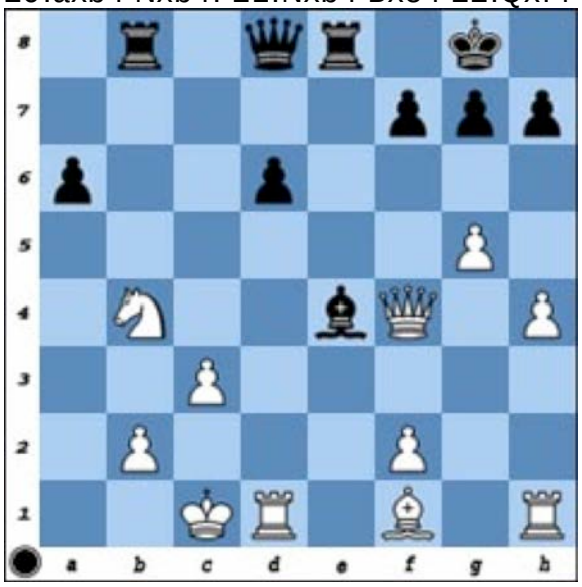


16…Bb7 !?
[In a complex version of the Sveshnikov \ Jeffery comes up with a new move over-the-board here. Previously played was 16…Be6 But from b7 the B has indirect pressure all the way to h1, which quickly materializes.]

17.g5!? [17.Nxf4 exf4 18.Qxf4 Ne5 was a typical pawn gambit that black was willing to play. Wesley So steers clear of it and continues his own play.]
17…Re8 [Putting more pressure on e4!]
18.Nxf4 [So wants to castle queenside and continue his attack, and to do this the annoying bishop has to be taken. But it seems good for black to open the e-file. The computer agrees this is best, but perhaps simply Bd3 was more practical?]
18…exf4 19.0-0-0



19…b4!
[Jeffery is going for the win. A sacrifice to open up not only white's pawn shield, but to liberate that B on b7 as well.]
20.axb4 Nxb4! 21.Nxb4 Bxe4 22.Qxf4



22…Rxb4 [Keep in mind that this was a G/25

rapid game, and Jeffery had already burnt through 20 minutes of that leading up to this position. So, let's not be too judgmental that he didn't play the absolute best move here.

A key moment in this key game. Jeffery plays the logical follow-up to his sacrifice, but it turns out to be not quite enough for an advantage. 22...Qa5! is the 'random' computer move that would have given Xiong the edge apparently. Then 23.Bd3 Bxh1 Black would win the exchange because if 24.Rxh1 Qa1+ 25.Bb1 Re2! is the hard to see killer move.

Note also that 22...Bxh1 23.f3 is not so good for black.]

23.Bd3! [So defends like a champion, giving the piece back to break the attack and reaching toward an ending that is going to be slightly better for him. The tables have turned, but there is still a lot of play. In the remainder of the game the main factor is Xiong was way behind on time.]

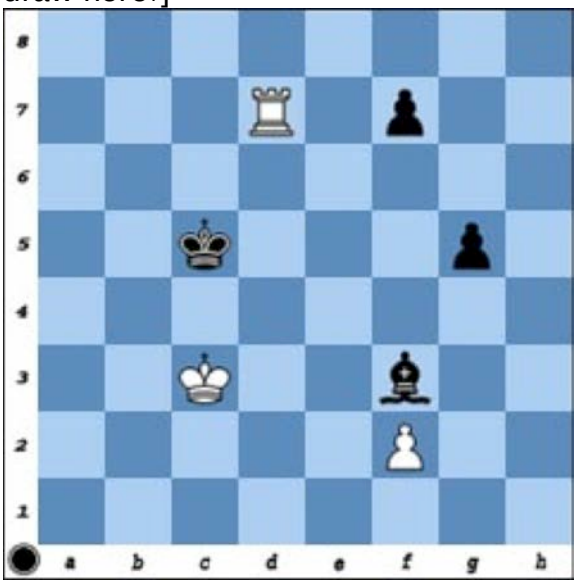
23...Bxh1 24.Qxb4 Bf3 25.Rd2 d5 [White has a slight edge here because his pawns are split and there are back rank issues. This must have been very frustrating for Jeffery as he appeared to be on the verge of winning early and now has a difficult ending in prospect; plus he at this point had fallen way behind on the clock and had less than a minute left with a 5 second increment to play on.]

26.Bxa6 h6 27.gxh6 Re4 28.Qc5 Rxh4 29.Qc8 Qxc8 30.Bxc8 Rxh6 31.Bb7 [And now there is that passed b-pawn for black to worry about in time trouble...]

31...Rh5 32.b4 Kf8 33.Kb2 Rf5 34.Kb3 Ke7 35.Ka4 g5 36.b5 Rf4+ 37.Ka5 Kd6 38.b6 Rc4 39.Rd3 Rc5+?
[39...g4 and black is fine.]

40.Kb4 Rc4+ 41.Kb3 Rf4 42.c4 Kc5 43.cxd5 Rb4+
[43...Kxb6 44.d6 Bg4 45.d7 Bxd7 46.Rxd7 Rxf2 Gets rid of the last pawn and its a theoretical draw; but Xiong did not have enough time to find this.]

44.Kc3 Rxb6 45.d6 Rxb7 [Here giving up the B with ...Bg4 doesn't work, due to 45...Bg4 46.Rd5#!]
46.d7 Rxd7 47.Rxd7 [So white has won the exchange, but does black have a fortress draw here?]



47...f5?!
[GM Ashley said in his commentary that this was the decisive mistake and black should outpost his bishop on e6. White's only way to win this position is basically to give back the exchange at the right moment and win the K and P endgame. By advancing his pawn to ...f5 Jeffery made that easier to do. Ashley said that leaving it on f7 and keeping his king 'forward' around the d4 square will draw, because when white sacs on e6 to try for the pawn ending black will be able to quickly run in and take the f2 pawn for a draw. 47...Bd5 48.Kd3 Be6 49.Rd8 g4 50.Ke3 Kc4 51.Kf4 Kc3 52.Ke5 Kc4 53.Rd6 Kc3 54.Rxe6 fxe6 55.Kxe6 Kd2 56.Kf5 Ke2 57.Kxg4 Kxf2 draw.]

48.Kd3 Be4+ 49.Ke3 g4 50.Kf4 Kc6 51.Rf7 Kd6 52.Rxf5 1-0 Black Resigns.

[Now we can see white will win the K+P ending. With the white pawn on f2 and his king well in front of it, black will easily lose the opposition and the pawn will queen. For example 52...Bxf5 53.Kxf5 Ke7 54.Kxg4 Kf6 55.Kf4 Ke7 56.Kf5 Kf7 57.f4 Ke7 58.Kg6 [etc.]

DEC 19-20 RED RIVER OPEN Oklahoma City OK

Embassy Suites Oklahoma City Downtown Medical Center, 741 North Phillips Avenue, OKC, OK 73104. US Chess Grand Prix Points: 20 (Enhanced). US Chess Junior Grand Prix

Open: This section is FIDE rated and uses FIDE rules. The tournament will use USCF ratings for pairings and prize purposes. Foreign players must disclose their FIDE ID number before 1st round in order to play in Open section. $$ $500-$250-$125. Class prizes if any, depend on entries. EF: $90, by 12/14 else $100. Senior/Birthday during tournament/Additional Family Member in Open section/Reentry from Amateur section $55 by 12/14 else $65. Reentry from Open section to Open section is not allowed.

Amateur: Open to players rated Under 1800. EF: $60, by 12/14 else $70. Senior/Birthday during tournament/Additional Family Member in Amateur section/Reentry $35 by 12/14 else $45. Reentry is allowed from other sections if player is qualified to play in Amateur. Prizes are 25% of Amateur entry fees. TD's discretion in allotting the 25% among classes. Tournament reserves the right to use FIDE rules on electronic devices and on starting White's clock at start of a round. Clocks will be set to 'halt at end'.

Both Open and Amateur: 5SS, G/90; 30 second increment. Rds. Sat 12/19: 10:00 am, 2:45 pm, 7:16pm, Sun: 9:30 am - 2:15 pm. Default late forfeiture time is one hour. TD may extend this time at TD's discretion. One 1/2 point bye available if requested before end of rd. 2 and before receiving full point bye, Note that unless TD rules otherwise on a case by case basis, withdrawals and last round byes are not eligible for prizes. Registration should be done online at www.dallaschess.com

K-12 Under 1200 Scholastic Joiner on Sat. 12/19 (one day event). 5SS, G/30: d5. Open to players rated under 1200 by USCF or unrated. EF: $30 by 11/19, $40 thereafter; Registration must be done online at www.dallaschess.com *Note that entry fee includes US Chess Federation membership for current USCF nonmembers.* Entries do not count toward base in Open and Amateur. Rd. 1 at 9:20 am, rest ASAP with small lunch break. Prizes: Trophies to top 12 individuals, five teams and top three unrated. Medals to Players who do not win a trophy.

ALL Sections: HOTEL RATES: $99/99/109/119, 405-239-3900 reserve by 11/18 and ask for Dallas Chess Club rate. Parking for overnight registered hotel guests $14 per day. Entries/questions: Dallas Chess Club, C/O Barbara Swafford, 2709 Longhorn Trail, Crowley, TX 76036. Info: Barb Swafford, 214-632-9000, info@dallaschess.com, www.dallaschess.com. Add $5 for CC phone entries; pre-reg. requires pre-payment. After 12/16 all registration and changes online only; all changes including withdrawals, $10 after 12/16.

NOTE that the number of players is limited and will be registered on a first come first serve basis. *Register early.*

NS. NC. W. FIDE. JGP for Open and Amateur

By IM John Donaldson

Two New Books by Gambit Publishing

The trend in chess training these days is an emphasis on active learning and two new offerings by Gambit Publishing address this need. One deals with chess tactics and the other endgames, but they have three things in common. The exercises they feature are likely to be unfamiliar as they are taken exclusively from games played in 2018-2019, the books are well designed and they are attractively priced.

600 Modern Chess Puzzles (Gambit 2020, 191 pages, paperback, figurine algebraic, $21.95) by Ukrainian Grandmaster Martyn Kravtsiv is aimed at players up to 2200. It offers 600 well-chosen puzzles organized by theme and degree of difficulty. The exercises are accompanied by hints, comprehensive solutions and an index of themes. This is a superior puzzle book.

The Chess Endgame Exercise Book (Gambit 2020, 191 pages, figurine algebraic, $22.95) by Grandmaster John Nunn is a book that will keep even the strongest and most ambitious busy. The 444 exercises drawn from practical games and studies are challenging. This can be seen by the scoring chart Nunn provides for the tests at the end of the book. A score of 131 out of 167 (78 percent) is a Grandmaster performance!

The exercises in this book are assigned stars according to their level of difficulty. While many one- and two-star positions can be figured out on the fly the more advanced exercises require a sturdy grounding in fundamental endgame theory. Lacking that background, unless you are a natural genius, it is going to be tough going.

Depending on the individual that leaves two possibilities. One is to dive in and give the exercises a serious try with the likelihood of failure high. Having fallen short, then and only then, check out the solutions carefully and bank some newfound endgame knowledge.

The other option is to go through a fundamental work first. One currently popular book is *100 Endgames You Must Know* by De La Villa, but another that can be strongly recommended is John Nunn's *Understanding Chess Endgames*.

Sometimes knowing the right idea and not exact calculation, saves the day. Nunn has plenty of these positions to offer including the following example.

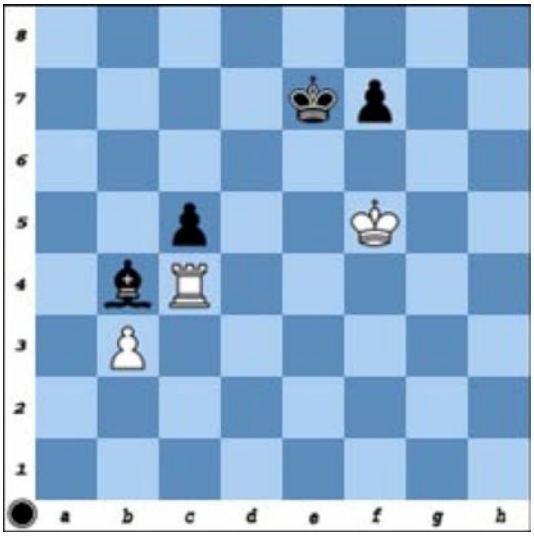
The following game is typical of top-level play these days and pits two young players against each other. White is a 2600 rated German Grandmaster and Black an Australian IM, not far from 2500. I've included the first 117 moves to provide the background.

Black is tortured for many moves (White just sidestepped the 50-move rule with the advance g4 on move 101) and likely both sides were living on the 30 second increment before the critical position was reached (the time control was 100 minutes for 40 moves then 50 minutes for 20 moves, then 15 minutes until the end of the game, with a 30 second increment for all moves).

Alexander Donchenko - Rishi Sardana
Gibraltar 2020

1.c4 e5 2.g3 Nf6 3.Bg2 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Nc3 Nb6 6.Nf3 Nc6 7.0-0 Be7 8.d3 0-0 9.Be3 Re8 10.Rc1 Bf8 11.Ne4 Nd4 12.Re1 c6 13.Nc5 Nxf3+ 14.Bxf3 Nd5 15.Bd2 b6 16.Ne4 Bb7 17.Nc3 Nxc3 18.Rxc3 Qc7 19.Qa4 c5 20.Be4 Bxe4 21.Qxe4 Rad8 22.Be3 Qc8 23.Qa4 Qb7 24.Rec1 e4 25.Rd1 g6 26.Ra3 a5 27.Rb3 Re6 28.Qxa5 exd3 29.Rdxd3 Rxd3 30.exd3 Qf3 31.Rxb6 Rxe3 32.fxe3 Qxe3+ 33.Kf1 Qxd3+ 34.Ke1 Qe3+

35.Kd1 Qd3+ 36.Qd2 Qb1+ 37.Ke2 Qe4+ 38.Qe3 Qc2+ 39.Kf1 Qd1+ 40.Kf2 Qc2+ 41.Qe2 Qf5+ 42.Qf3 Qc2+ 43.Qe2 Qf5+ 44.Qf3 Qc2+ 45.Kg1 Qb1+ 46.Kg2 Qxa2 47.h4 h5 48.Kh2 Qa4 49.Qd5 Qg4 50.Rf6 Qe2+ 51.Kh3 Qg4+ 52.Kg2 Qe2+ 53.Rf2 Qe7 54.b3 Bg7 55.Rc2 Bd4 56.Qf3 Kg7 57.Re2 Qd7 58.Qe4 Qb5 59.Qf3 Qd7 60.Re4 Qa7 61.Kh2 Qa2+ 62.Re2 Qa7 63.Re1 Qd7 64.Rd1 Qa7 65.Qd3 Qa2+ 66.Kh3 Qa5 67.Qc4 Qa2 68.Qd3 Qa5 69.Qe4 Qb5 70.Rd3 Qa5 71.Rd1 Qb5 72.Rb1 Qd7+ 73.Kh2 Bc3 74.Rf1 Qd2+ 75.Kh3 Qd7+ 76.Kg2 Qa7 77.Qd5 Bd4 78.Kh3 Bf6 79.Rf4 Qb6 80.Re4 Qb5 81.Kg2 Qb8 82.Ra4 Qb5 83.Ra2 Qb6 84.Kh2 Bd4 85.Rd2 Bf6 86.Kg2 Bd4 87.Rc2 Qf6 88.Ra2 Qe7 89.Qf3 Qd7 90.Rd2 Qa7 91.Re2 Qc7 92.Qd5 Qa7 93.Re1 Qa2+ 94.Kh3 Qf2 95.Qe4 Qf6 96.Qe2 Qf5+ 97.Kg2 Qd7 98.Qf3 Qa7 99.Re4 Qa2+ 100.Kh3 Qa7 101.g4 Qd7 102.Kh2 hxg4 103.Rxg4 Be5+ 104.Kg1 Qd2 105.Re4 Bf6 106.Kf1 Qd5 107.Kg2 Bd4 108.Rf4 Qe6 109.h5 gxh5 110.Qxh5 Kf8 111.Qf3 Qg6+ 112.Rg4 Qc2+ 113.Kh3 Qc3 114.Qxc3 Bxc3 115.Rc4 Bb4 116.Kg4 Ke7 117.Kf5



Here is where Nunn starts:

When playing with a bishop against a rook, it is especially important to try to keep your pawn on the opposite-colored squares to your bishop. Having them on the same-colored squares gives the enemy pieces free rein on the squares of the opposite color. In this position from A. Donchenko-Sardana, Gibraltar 2020, Black played

117...f6? and lost after 118.Re4+ Kd6

If 118...Kf7 119.Re6 Bc3 120.Rc6 Bd4 121.Rc7+ Ke8 122.Ke6 Kd8 123.Rd7+ Kc8 124.b4 Bg1 125.b5 c4 126.Rg7 Bf2 127.Kd6 c3 128.Rc7+ Kb8 129.Rxc3 Kb7 130.Rf3 with a simple win.

119.Kxf6

Black's remaining pieces form a compact unit, but White can eventually get his king to c4.

119...Bc3+ 120.Kf5 Bd4

or 120….Kd5 121.Kf4 Bd2+ 122.Kf3 Bh6 123.Ra4 Bg7 124.Ke3 Kc6 125.Kd3 Kb5 126.Ra7 Be5 127.Rb7+ Kc6 128.Re7 Bd6 129.Re6 Kd5 130.Rf6 Be7 131.Rf5+ Ke6 132.Rh5.

121.Re8 Kc6 122.Ke4 Bg1 123.Kd3 Bh2 124.Kc4 Bd6 125.Re6 Kd7 126.Kd5 Bf8 127.Rc6 1–0 as Rxc5 will win.

Although mistakes are easy to make at 30 seconds per move, here the above general principle would have helped Black make the correct choice, which involves leaving the pawn on f7.

Nunn concludes: “He could have drawn by 117...Ba3! (117…Kf8! is the only other drawing move, leading to similar play after 118. Kf6 Ba3) 118.Re4+ Kf8 119.Re3 (or 119.Re2 Bb4 120.Rg2 Ke7) 119...Kg7! 120.Re2 Bb4! 121.Rg2+ Kf8 and White cannot make progress since Black can always arrange to check the white king if it advances to f6”.

Imagine you are tired and groggy after having played for five hours. Take into account that for a considerable time you have had only 30 seconds on your clock. Wouldn’t you like some rules to guide you? *The Chess Endgame Exercise Book* will provide that sort of help.

Knowing what books to buy can be a tricky business, not just for the financial expenditure but also for the time spent. A book like Nunn’s most recent effort has the potential to keep one busy for several months, so it’s important to make sure it’s a good fit.

Gambit has two ways it does this. First, it has long offered prospective buyers the opportunity to sample PDF files from each of its books. Second, John Nunn has started producing videos on new offerings, which are available on YouTube. The links can be found on the front page of the Gambit website at (www.gambitbooks.com).

Both these books are warmly recommended.